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ABSTRACT

This counselor training program is based on the self-management concept which has been "field-tested", and which focuses upon trainee behaviors and is committed to self-directed change. Program participants were assigned to learning labs of six to eleven students where they worked in triads on a communication skills approach to interpersonal interactions. At the beginning of each lab session, students identified two goals they hoped to achieve during that session. A self-evaluation component was included in order to establish a self-reinforcement schedule. While students learned to identify behavioral changes they would like to have made in the learning process, they were not always able to observe changes they were actually making. The author discusses the difficulties associated with using this technique with actual clients. (Author)

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IMPLEMENTING SELF-MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES WITH COUNSELOR-TRAINEES

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Since their inception, counselor training programs have been plagued with the problems of observation and demonstration of acquired skills. As the profession has "grown up" in its knowledge of the intricate complexities of the helping relationship, we have also compounded our problems of observation and demonstration. There have been significant achievements by counseling researchers in this area, but we still face some unresolved questions: How can we know the objective levels of competency of trained counselors? How can we demonstrate (objectively) that counselor-trainee are progressing systematically toward established competency levels? Can we objectively involve the counselor-trainee in his educative process, thus enhancing the probability that (s)he will acquire those counseling skills?

I propose that the answers to these questions lie within a behavioral conceptualization of the counseling process, and through the development of self-management and self-monitoring strategies. First, if we are to impose the criterion, objective, to this process, we must look to those aspects of the helping process that can be observed, either from the view of the counselor, the client, or the supervisor. Granted, this excludes much of the reactive aspects that are so important to the helping process. While we can observe the behaviors of the counselor (as can the client), we shall not have access to the client's internalized reactions to those behaviors. The question, as raised in this paper, however, speaks to the existence and quantity of trained counselor behaviors rather than the quality of those behaviors. We shall assume temporarily, (as most counselor educators do) that the behaviors we are training are quality behaviors and facilitative in the helping process.

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The second contingency, self-management, is the process through which we can begin to plot learning patterns and performance patterns. Research literature, rather than training literature, provides the window for examination of this process. Within a research context, all behavioral analysis that comes from the Subject relies on self-reports. The inherent problem of self-report studies is the reliability of the report, as almost any researcher can attest. Developing a system that simplifies and systematizes the reporting process is usually going to improve reliability, but even then, there remains the problem of reactivity to the measurement activity.

In other words, the act of self-observation and recording of a class of events is likely to affect the frequency of occurence of those events. McFall (1970) observes that almost any behavior is going to change when it comes under observation. It is yet another manifestation of the Hawthorne effect. While this is obviously undesirable for the researcher, the same phenomenon can be very desirable, for the trainer. Indeed, the Hawthorne effect may be the willing benefactor for much of the counselor-training process. Should that be the case, as counselor-educators, we should be looking for systematic applications of the Hawthorne effect in order to maximize the learning process and enhance our own teaching styles. Within this context of Hawthorne effect applications, the self-management or self-monitoring strategies seem to fit. There is a further statement that supports self-management/self-monitoring strategies. By their nature, these applications call upon the learner to invest him (her) self in the process as well as the product of learning. Through self-monitoring strategies, the learner knows what it is (s)he is seeking to <u>do</u>, knows how to recognize it when the event occurs, and is able to plot his/her progress through the learning process. This last point, plotting progress, allows for the mobilization of another significant learning phenomenon that most trainers pend to overlook. By accounting one's progress <u>during</u> learning (rather than after learning) the learner is able to use his/her own internal self-reinforcement patterns

to increase investment in the process. In a logical sense, self-reinforcement patterns (when they exist, functionally) are likely to be more potent than are external (teacher) reinforcement schedules.

Applying the Concept of Self-management to Training

Self-management is an uncomplicated concept. Thus, it might appear that its application to a training program would be straight-forward. We have learned from experience (not theory) that this is not the case. Given that it might be our skills at applying the concept, rather than the concept itself, I shall describe the thinking and experience we have had, with Purdue University counselor-trainees.

There were some decisions that had to be made prior to introducing self-management procedures. The first of these was, how shall we introduce students to the idea of checking their own behavior in quasi-counseling settings? It was decided that all students would be asked to read Mager's Preparing Instructional Objectives (1962) as a first step. This was followed by a classroom exercise in "goal-writing". Students were told that their first goal would be "To know three other class members by name, state of origin, and serious hobbies (pastimes) by the end of the class meeting." They were asked to write on a sheet of paper how they planned to achieve this goal (action step), and how they would realistically demonstrate that they had achieved the goal.

After the first class meeting, students were assigned to "learning labs" ranging from six to eleven students in size. In following weeks they worked in these labs in triads, using exercises and following the course content as described by Hackney and Nye (1973). This involves a communciation skills approach to interpersonal interactions.

At the beginning of each of the weekly lab sessions, students were asked to identify two goals that they would like to achieve during that session, what action steps they planned to use, how their behavior would be different when the goal had been achieved, and at the end of the lab, their satisfaction with

their effort for that session. As a side note, we chose to include self-evaluation as a component of self-management in order to establish a self-reinforcement schedule. It was our hope that by doing this we could tie self-reinforcement to specific observable, a priori-identified accomplishments, in addition to typical post hoc "feelings".

While students can learn to identify behavioral changes they would want to make in the learning process, they are not always able to observe the behavioral changes that they are making. Therefore, it is often necessary for the student to use an external criterion when evaluation is appropriate. There are several ways that we tried to use in addressing this problem. First, the triads, in which much rehearsal took place, offered the opportunity for feedback. Perhaps it would be better to call it "focused feedback". Members of the triad were asked to share their goals with one another and to allow themselves to become invested in the achievement of one another's goals. This frequently provided the information each learner needed in order to assess his progress. It proved desirable, too, because it removed professorial authority from the process, thus reducing the potential threat level of evaluation. Equally important, out of this grew an interdependent critique system among students. Frequently, students would point out to one another behaviors that needed to be worked on, thus leading to additional goal-setting activity. The trust level of the group grew (and this has happened in several labs) and people began to describe the lab as a "cognitively-focused" encounter group experience.

Cumulative files were kept for each student by lab instructors. Students were asked to review their files each week in order to get feedback on instructor comments and to allow them to recognize progress in goal-writing skills and goal-achievement. Through approximately two-thirds of the semester, students used this process in quasi-interviews while working in the triads. During the final third of the semester, students were introduced systematically to live

clients.

Self-management becomes more difficult to apply when trainees are seeing clients. For one thing the whole process takes on an intensity, a realness, that interferes with trainee purposes. In our experience, it is at this point, if at any, that trainees are going to balk at behavioral conceptualizations. They want to focus upon relationship, and lack a very clear criterion of what that should be. In any event, we ask them to cassette-record each interview and to review the tape immediately after each session. We are currently working on two approaches to evaluation of taped interviews. The first is a conceptual framework for the session. What transpired behaviorally? What did the counselor think was going on in the interview, from the client's perspective? How did this affect the progress of interview? What were the counselor's reactions to the session? What are the counselor's plans for ensuing sessions?

The second approach, and this is very much in the developmental stage, is a method by which counselor-trainees can perform systematic content analyses of the verbal portions of tapes. This includes the classification of their verbal responses, the identification of response patterns, the identification of client verbal patterns that are in response to the counselor patterns. In other words, we are attempting to develop a content analysis system for trainee use that follows the system used by current content analysis researchers. Here, as with our other strategies, the objective is to sensitize the trainee to look at his behavior, its effect upon his client, and to begin to make <u>a priori</u> decisions about what he wants to continue to use, as determined by his goals for the interview.

All of this may sound more formitable than it is. In a lot of ways, we are fumbling in the dark, inefficiently, and not always with our goals in mind. Yet, we are beginning to see a program emerge that is "field-tested", focused upon trainee behaviors, committed to self-directed change, when possible.

SELF-EVALUATION FORM*
COUNSELING PRE-PRACTICUM
PURDUE UNIVERSITY

Name Lois Wark Lab Session 2 Date / /

MY GOAL(S) FOR THIS WEEK:

GOAL #1: I will avoid over-participation either in the counseling session (as counselor) or in group discussion.

ACTION STEP: I will respond when asked a question but will volunteer comments only after 4 other members speak.

GOAL #1 WILL HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED WHEN: I count the number of times I comment and find that I have "waited my turn" according to action step.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

GOAL #2: I will truly listen to my client.

ACTION STEP: Not either try to interpret or let my mind wander.

GOAL #2 WILL HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED WHEN: Be able to restate what client has said with 80% accuracy.

EVALUATION (to be completed by student at end of lab session)

	completely dissatisfied				completely satisfied
GOAL #1	1	2 better←	(3)	4	5
GOAL #2	1	2	3	(4)	5
OVERALL PERFORMANCE	1	2	3	4	5

Supervisor

*Use additional pages if more than two goals for a session.

2/18/75

SELF-EVALUATION FORM*
COUNSELING PRE-PRACTICUM
PURDUE UNIVERSITY

Name Lois Wark Lab Session #11 Date 11/18/74

MY GOAL(S) FOR THIS WEEK:

GOAL #1: To gain in effectiveness by responding to the most important part of my client's communications.

ACTION STEP: Carefully weigh each communication from client and respond to the most important part of it, whether it be effective or cognitive.

GOAL #1 WILL HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED WHEN: As analyzed by audio tape, I will have responded at least 80% of the time to those clues given by client which are most salient to his concerns.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

GOAL #2: To become increasingly aware of "flag" words, like "alone", loneliness", fear, etc. and respond to them appropriately.

ACTION STEP: Identify and respond to feeling or affect words of client in such a way as to elicit further expression of feeling from him.

GOAL #2 WILL HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED WHEN: As analyzed by audio-tape, all but one flag word will have been noted and appropriately responded to.

EVALUATION (to be completed by student at end of lab session)

	completely dissatisfied			completely satisfied	
GOAL #1	1	2	3	(4)*	5
GOAL #2	1	2	3	(4)	5
OVERALL PERFORMANCE	1	2	3-----0--------4		5

I will be glad when I can see far more during an interview, but this one felt good and Nilli seemed to feel good about it too.

*Nilli indicated that this was O.K.

Supervisor

*Use additional pages if more than two goals for a session.

INTERVIEW RECORD FORM

Identifying Data:

Name: Fred

Interview Number: #2

Case No.:

Date: Dec 4

Counselor: Lois Wark

Time: 11:30 a.m.

Course of Interview (Include: A. Brief notes on what transpired behaviorally, what client and counselor said, how client acted. B. Interpretations of content of session, what counselor thought was going on and how this effects progress.)

(Behavior: thinking, feeling, and actions)

Client missed his second appointment, called, apologized and willingly set up another. At the outset he indicated that his "problem" of last week had subsided and therefore would like to talk about his anger. I asked him to describe the contingencies surrounding his angry feelings. He mentioned the following circumstances: 1) when another person gets angry with him; 2) when he is "ordered" to do something rather than "asked"; 3) when a third party is abused. He has strong physical reactions to anger and tends to react to it by "blowing" or repressing it and doing something else. I asked if he ever tells people who make him angry how he feels; his response was negative. "I don't like to hurt people." These ideas were further examined a bit.

Client gained insight into the conflicting roles he plays in dorm situations, i.e. counselor-disciplinarian-friend and acknowledged hurt as an emotion involved when his friends show hostility towards him.

I felt a greater relaxation in client this week, less (though still pronounced) nervous laughter. For the first time I felt he recognized his role conflicts. The examination of his anger and ways of handling it were apparently meaningful to him, but I feel this area needs more work.

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Counselor's Reactions to Session: (positive and negative)

Progress definitely seemed to be made. Discussion of conflicting roles, anger and the ways of handling it were o.k. I should have encouraged further examination of the hurt expressed on one emotion involved. I felt that I followed client fairly well, except for a middle portion of the interview where I obviously was too directive, altho client didnt read negatively. I was too sure of where I wanted him to go.

Plans for Ensuing Sessions:

I would examine the hurt and anger further. Eventually his nervous laugh must be worked on too.

Supervision Comments: (Include issues to be discussed with supervisor, questions, suggestions from supervisor.)

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COUNSELOR SELF-EVALUATIVE RESPONSE FORM

Code # _____ Client time _____ Counselor time _____ Other _____

Counselor: _____ Student: _____

Beginning of 5 minute section (spoken by _____)

End of 5 minute section (spoken by _____)

	A Silence	B Minimal Response	C Reflection		D Suggestion Advice	E Reassurance Support	F Confrontation	G Question				H Other Statements
			Content	Feeling				Content		Feeling		
								Tied	Lead	Tied	Lead	
3												
6												
9												
12												
15												
18												
21												
24												
27												

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